

## About the NetSpot Innovation Fund

The NetSpot Innovation Fund has been established to provide funding to the tertiary education sector for extending Moodle functionality.

One of the concerns in Tertiary Education in Australasia and probably globally is the sustainability of eLearning innovations.

In recent times, various funding sources have stimulated the creation of innovative services or products in the eLearning space. Inevitably, some of these projects have been popularly received during their early stages of development with a significant degree of usage and adoption. At this point, the notion of sustainability becomes relevant. Having established a user-base, the innovation either needs to be supported by the individual (person, department, university) or by the community of users for it to be sustained over the long term. There needs to be leadership; someone or some organisation that drives the innovation, coordinates activity, engages the community, establishes the vision and articulates the pathway forward. There are also issues of technical support and providing specialist advice to technology adopters.

This requires an investment in time and money; a commitment if you will, and as we know in the vast majority of cases, innovations are not sustained when funding is removed and the investment required cannot be found.

In the tertiary setting, most funding for eLearning initiatives is project based and while independence and user choice around eLearning technologies is definitely something to be encouraged, there are clear benefits in framing these activities within existing systems which can provide a degree of commercial scaffolding such as product distribution, professional services and ongoing development frameworks.

An example of a viable commercial scaffold may be integration with existing, sustainable, eLearning innovation such as Moodle that has already reached a critical mass of users and can therefore become the vehicle for sustainability of this new innovation. The benefits of an approach based on product sustainability via the Moodle community are that the innovation is freely available; commercial partners are available as potential sales and service providers; the maintenance of the innovation can be either the responsibility of the originator or may be picked up by a volunteer (individual, institution, corporate) who have their own reasons/reward for providing this effort and there is a greater likelihood of broader applicability.

### Why you should apply:

NetSpot proposes to support the sector by creating a \$200,000 eLearning Innovation Fund with the specific aim of sustaining proven eLearning innovations. In a sense this is further funding for seed projects that have demonstrated the potential for sustainability.

NetSpot Innovation Fund projects offer multiple benefits to the tertiary education sector:

- Organisations benefit from new opportunities to form partnerships with other tertiary institutions;
- Individuals benefit from contributing to, and exposure in the tertiary sector and growing their knowledge and expertise of the products;
- Moodle community benefits through active contributions and new code.

### Who should apply:

The Innovation Fund is open to institutions in tertiary education sector based in the Asia Pacific region. Individual applicants must be members of either ascilite, HERDSA and/or ODLAA. Suitable fund applicants include:

- eLearning administrators
- LMS managers
- Tertiary teaching and learning faculty staff
- Tertiary faculties with a seed technology project that requires funding for development.

## 2011 Guidelines for funding

### Eligibility

Criteria for successful fund applicants include:

- The organisations are Australasian based;
- The fund application is for second round funding for a proven eLearning innovation and the application can demonstrate significant acceptance or interest within the Tertiary Education sector;
- At least one member of the project team is a member of ascilite, HERDSA or ODLAA;
- The application has the support of the university senior management;
- The application must be multi-institutional;
- The eLearning innovation must be open-source and use the GPL v3 license;
- The eLearning innovation must enhance Moodle (by extending the features and functions of Moodle through development of new extensions or by integrating Moodle with external systems); it is essentially a software development project;

- The innovation does not have to be a new tool; it could be changing the way an existing tool is used.

### Project focus

Funded projects will:

- Support cross institution collaboration;
- Be based on an existing innovation;
- Enhance the capabilities of Moodle;
- Benefit the tertiary education sector; and
- Be freely shared.

### Funding

Applicants may apply for funding from \$10,000 - \$50,000.

Funding will be paid in three payments, 40% on commencement, 40% on receipt of mid-year report and 20% at completion.

Applicants will be asked to demonstrate value for money, including in-kind contributions.

Funding can be used for:

- Project management;
- Project roles eg technical resources, content development, facilitator, project manager;
- Technical support and communications;
- Software development (note that NetSpot can provide software development resources in lieu of the cash grant or a component of it);
- Production of relevant training materials and documentation;
- Administrative costs;
- Project delivery costs eg facilitating cross institution collaboration;
- Travel and registration costs for 1 project member to present at MoodleMoot 2012.

Funding cannot be used for:

- Purchasing infrastructure, equipment or software;
- Training or professional development projects.

## Timelines

Milestones	Timeline
Funding advertised	Wed, 28 September 2011
Expressions of interest due	Fri, 21 October 2011
Advice to Expression of interest applicants	Wed, 9 November 2011
Applications close	Wed, 30 November 2011
Selection process completed	Wed, 14 December 2011
Advice provided to successful applicants	Mon, 19 December 2011
Project induction and commencement	Mon, 30 January 2012
Project implementation plan final and first payment	Wed, 15 February 2012
Project team meetings with NetSpot Project Manager commence	Wed, 22 February 2012
Team mid-year progress report and second payment	Wed, 20 June 2012
MoodleMoot presentation - progress	July 2012
Team final report	Wed, 31 October 2012
Handover of outputs	Wed, 31 October 2012
Project acquittal and final payment	Fri, 30 November 2012

## 2011 Project selection

**Expressions of interest:** the expression of interest form focuses on the eligibility requirements and allows you to provide an overview of your proposal, prior to the formal application process. This will allow the selection panel to eliminate ineligible projects without the applicant having to spend a lot of time completing the full application.

**Expressions of interest must be lodged by 5:00 pm EST on 21/10/2011**

Once your expression of interest has been reviewed you will be advised if your project is eligible. You will then complete the full application form, which will extend your expression of interest.

**Please note:** Acceptance of the Expression of Interest does not guarantee that the project will be funded.

**Applications:** The application form has been designed to guide you through the process where you will, if you answer all the questions, address all the selection criteria and develop the basis for your final project plan.

**Applications must be lodged by 5:00 pm EST on 30/11/2011**

A selection panel will conduct a merit-based assessment of applications shortly after applications close. You may be contacted during the selection period to seek clarification on your proposal if necessary.

The selection panel will inform applicants of the results of the selection process from 14/12/2011. The selection criteria below will be used as a basis for selection. Appeals will not be considered.

**Selection criteria**

1. Project overview
  - Provides evidence of eligibility, contact details and summary information.
2. Project proposal provides:
  - Compelling need;
  - Genuine commitment and involvement from organisations;
  - Clear description of what has already been achieved; and
  - Clear description of how this project will extend and/or embed the project outcome;
  - Appropriate code management practices;
  - Appropriate review and evaluation strategies within the project period.
3. Implementation plan
  - Action plan is viable and provides evidence of good planning;
  - Project team has the capability to execute project;
  - Realistic budget is provided which demonstrates value for money.
  - Milestones and budget match project proposal;
  - Effective measures for sharing the outcomes from the project.
4. Project impact
  - Genuine benefits to tertiary sector.

## **Project requirements**

If you are successful in winning funding you will be required to comply with the following:

### **Project commencement and support**

Successful applicants will form a contract with the NetSpot Innovation Fund. The contract will outline the detail of the project, project deliverables, milestones, funding arrangements and reporting requirements. The project team will be supported throughout the duration of the project via a range of activities and processes implemented by NetSpot, including:

- induction workshop upon commencement;
- monitoring and support from the NetSpot Project Manager;
- exposure to other project teams through collaborative tools;
- advocacy to get relevant functionality into Moodle core code;
- technical support.

### **Project reporting**

Each approved project will formally report twice annually:

- outcomes-focused mid-project progress report;
- a final outcomes-focused report at the conclusion of the project.

Each project is required to keep accurate records of income and expenditure associated with the project.

### **Project communication and participation in promotions**

Funded projects will be required to participate in nationally and locally coordinated information gathering and sharing strategies, provide regular updates on progress in the NetSpot Client Community and contribute to promotional events such as the Australian MoodleMoot, and relevant professional body events, etc.

Projects are also expected to support and encourage knowledge sharing in the sector beyond the life of the project.

### **Branding**

Co-branding of the NetSpot Innovation Fund and involved organisations is to be used on all materials.

### **Copyright and intellectual property**

Is retained by the applicant.

### **Engagement with the tertiary education sector**

Applicants for NetSpot Innovation funding should show how they will engage with the tertiary education sector when framing their project.

### **Project deliverables**

Projects will be required to clearly show how they will return benefit to the tertiary education.

Project outputs will be made available under the GPL v3 licence.

Project outputs will comply with technical development standards (information to be provided during induction workshop).

Project outputs will be contributed to the Moodle Community.